

Liberty Theatre marks 'first' anniversary

Owner reflects on his first year in downtown Camas

By DAWN FELDHAUS
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The audience will be invited to participate as the Liberty Theatre celebrates its first anniversary, under the ownership of Rand Thornsley.

He signed a five-year lease on the theater in January 2011.

A sing-along/quote along version of "The Blues Brothers" will be shown Wednesday and Thursday, at 8 p.m. The 1980 movie starred John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd. Due to the R rating for strong language, the film will be restricted to adult audiences and teens (13-16) who are accompanied by parents.

A sing-along version of "Hairspray" will be shown Friday and Saturday, at 5:30 p.m. The 2007 movie featured John Travolta, Nikki Blonsky and Queen Latifah. It is rated PG for language, some suggestive content and momentary teen smoking.

The movies were chosen through an online poll. Admission will cost \$3.50 per person, and tickets can be pre-purchased at the box office and online at www.camasliberty.com.

The Liberty Theatre is located at 315 N.E. Fourth Ave., in downtown Camas. The 350-seat theater was built in 1927 and restored in 1996 after a fire gutted the interior two years earlier.

Renovations and upgrades were overseen last year by Thornsley, managing director of Rootstock Capital Management, LLC.

He said he has learned a lot since then — things that don't work or things that need to be done a bit differently.

"It varies with the season," Thornsley said. "Last fall when school started, we continued our summer schedule for another two months which caused us a considerable financial loss. Next year, we will know once school starts that we have to cut back and pro-

gram the Liberty a little differently."

He had hoped to have the smaller screen theater open by now and be able to serve beer and wine in that area as well as the balcony of the main theater.

Thornsley said he has not had sufficient cash-flow to move forward with those two items.

"We have started doing some work in the small theater — which we are renaming the Granada — and it looks like it will definitely be open before school lets out," he said.

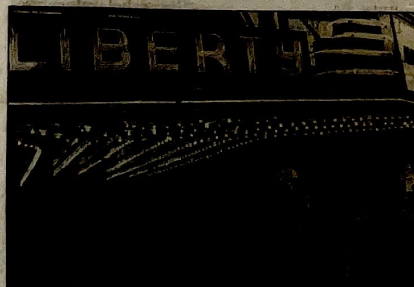
In February, Thornsley and the owner of the Kiggins Theatre in downtown Vancouver, went to Olympia to testify at a senate hearing. House Bill 2568 would allow theaters such as the Liberty and Kiggins to get a special license to sell beer and wine in a mixed ages setting. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Jim Moeller, of Vancouver, was tabled until next year.

"Our business model when we leased the Liberty is based on being able to serve beer and wine in order to attract adults who are looking to combine a movie with an adult beverage," Thornsley said. "We feel it is key to our success. We want the theater to have a small town feel and be family friendly, but in the evening — especially mid-week — our business suffers from lack of attendance needed to sustain a successful operation."

He said the Liberty still faces a major financial hurdle within the next 18 months. 35 mm film profits will no longer be made sometime in 2013.

"The exact date will vary from studio to studio," Thornsley said. "At that time in order to show mainstream Hollywood films, the Liberty will have to have a DCI compliant digital projection system. That system right now starts at \$60,000 and goes up from there. Unless we can increase business substantially from last year, that equipment will be beyond our financial reach."

The Liberty will celebrate another anniversary in June, to commemorate its 85th year. For more information, call 859-9555.



DAWN FELDHAUS/POST-RECORD

Rand Thornsley hopes more people will view movies at the Liberty Theatre, in downtown Camas. Thornsley, managing director of Rootstock Capital Management, LLC, signed a five-year lease on the theater in January 2011. Green lights have been added to the theater's entryway this month, to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Anniversary festivities are scheduled for this week.